Effective school to employment transitions for young people with disability. A Rapid Review of the Literature
RESEARCH TO ACTION

>> Bridging the gap between what we know and what we do

Effective school to employment transitions
A guide for workers
BEST PRACTICE FOR SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS

1. Create an expectation at school, at home and in the community that young people with disability will seek and obtain employment as part of their adult life.

2. Collaborate locally with other service providers to form partnerships between schools, employment services and disability services.

3. Enable participation in work experience at multiple time points and provide opportunities for work experience in the same or different areas of work.

4. Provide collaborative cross-sector opportunities for scaffolded skill development and transfer of skills from one setting to another.

5. Involve families and local community supports at all levels of discussion about employment and post-school adult life roles.


The research informing this poster is available to view in the Research to Action Guide on Effective School to Employment Transitions, available at www.cadr.org.au.

1. High Expectations of Employability
2. Local Cross-agency Collaboration
3. Participation of Young Person
4. Skills Development
5. Family Involvement
6. Early Transition Planning

BY
- Young person
- Schools
- Employment services
- Disability services
- Family
- Community

BETWEEN
- Transition school personnel
- Employment services personnel
- Disability services
- Local employers

FOR
- Young person
- Employment services personnel
- Transition school personnel

IN
- Decision-making
- Work experience
- Skills development
Leaving school and getting a job

A guide for young people with disability who want to work
THE CENTRE FOR APPLIED DISABILITY RESEARCH
The Centre for Applied Disability Research (CADR) is an initiative of National Disability Services (NDS). CADR aims to improve the wellbeing of people living with disability by gathering insights, building understanding, and sharing knowledge. CADR’s applied research agenda is helping to build the evidence base and support stakeholders to better understand what works, for whom, under what circumstances and at what cost.

RESEARCH TO ACTION GUIDES
Bridging the gap between what we know and what we do. Our objective is to build a comprehensive online collection of disability research and translational resources for the Australian context. Our Research to Action Guides are based on the best available local and international evidence and put together by subject matter experts to support research end users to engage with the evidence. We gather and analyse evidence about what works, and package that information into efficient and practical resources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
This Guide was authored by Associate Professor Loretta Sheppard, Dr. Rosamund Harrington and Kelly Howard from the School of Allied Health, Occupational Therapy, at Australian Catholic University. This resource was developed with support of Australian governments through the Research and Data Working Group.
NDS Gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Government in establishing the NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research.

SUGGESTED CITATION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE
This Research to Action Guide presents the important things to know for young people looking to make the transition from school to employment in Australia. This Guide includes an evidence based way for students to think about what is right for them, and the “golden rules” for transitioning from school to employment. Some handy websites are also listed. It is important that young people are supported to get the most out of this Guide.

The ‘Effective School to Employment Transitions Research to Action Guide’ comprises a suite of resources including a rapid review of relevant literature and three practice guidance resources, targeted at service users, service providers and disability employment practice leaders. The Rapid Review provides a full listing of references. The whole Research to Action Guide is available at the CADR Clearing House, www.cadr.org.au.

FEEDBACK
Do you have feedback, or a suggestion for a Research to Action Guide? We welcome your thoughts and ideas. Please contact info@cadr.org.au.
THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT GOING FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

Everybody has the right to work! It can be hard finding a job while you are in school, or when you leave school. This Guide can help. This Guide explores some ideas about getting a job. These ideas have been found through research.

This Guide will help you think about what is important to you and what is right for you.

In this Guide you will find information about:
- Thinking about what is right for you
- The six golden rules for getting a job
- Ways to increase your chances of getting a job
- Who helps with what?
- Useful links
- References

THINKING ABOUT WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU

You may not know what job is right for you, or how to get one, but you can start by thinking about what you are good at, what you like to do best and what skills you may need to do the job you want.

Think about these three key questions to get you started:

**Who am I?**
- What am I good at?
- What do I like to do?
- Who would I like to be like?

**What sort of jobs are there in my community?**
- What sort of jobs are around?
- What sort of organisations are in my local area?
- Where do people I know work?

**How will I fit in?**
- Where am I comfortable?
- Where can I use my skills?
- What new skills can I learn?
SIX GOLDEN RULES FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

1. Expectation: Expect that you will find a job!

2. Collaboration: Everyone needs to work together

3. Participation: Be a part of all meetings and decisions

4. Skills development: Keep learning new skills

5. Family involvement: Ask your family or supporters to help

6. Early transition planning: Start planning for your career in Year 9 or as soon as you are ready
WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF GETTING A JOB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You are more likely to get a job if you:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have had a paid job in the community while at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have done work experience while at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have responsibilities for household jobs at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in work preparation activities at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are as independent in self-care as you can be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get on well with other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have people around you who <strong>believe</strong> that you will get a job when you leave school and have big plans for you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know people in the community and have good community networks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHO HELPS WITH WHAT?

FIND SUPPORT AT SCHOOL

Your school teachers should help you explore your job options, try out different types of jobs through work experience programs, and connect you to support services to help you get and keep a job. They can help you develop important skills for work such as:

- being able to talk with other people easily
- managing your time and money
- getting around in the community
- writing a resume and participate in job interviews.

Talk to your teacher about what you would like to do after school and how they can support you.

FIND SUPPORT THROUGH THE NDIS

If you are eligible to access individual support through the NDIS, your NDIS planner or a Local Area Coordination service (LAC) can help you get the right supports to get work experience and find a job. Supports for getting and keeping a job can be included in your NDIS plan, so make sure you talk about this with your NDIS planner or LAC.


FIND SUPPORT THROUGH DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

If you are in your final year of school, or in Year 11 and wish to do a school-based apprenticeship, Disability Employment Services can help you look for work, get the right education and find a job. Disability Employment Services provide a service guarantee which includes information on what help you can expect from them, what your responsibilities are, and what to do if you’re not happy with the services they provide. You may be able to self-register for Disability Employment Services support if you are in your final year of school and have been receiving extra support to help you at school. You can contact a local Disability Employment Services provider directly to ask for help.


MORE ABOUT GETTING AND KEEPING A JOB

Job Access is the national hub for workplace and employment information for people with disability, employers and service providers. It provides information on available support, rights and responsibilities, video stories, downloadable information sheets, and links to information about medical conditions or disability types.

MORE ABOUT PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Ticket to Work is a national program helping young people get jobs. Find out more via the program website: http://www.tickettowork.org.au/

Produced by Ticket to Work, this flow chart illustrating services and processes which can assist students on their pathways to employment:
NDS gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Government in establishing the NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research.
Effective school to employment transitions for young people with disability

Guidance for practice leaders
THE CENTRE FOR APPLIED DISABILITY RESEARCH

The Centre for Applied Disability Research (CADR) is an initiative of NDS. CADR aims to improve the wellbeing of people living with disability by gathering insights, building understanding and sharing knowledge. CADR’s applied research agenda is helping to build the evidence base and support stakeholders to better understand what works, for whom, under what circumstances and at what cost.

RESEARCH TO ACTION GUIDES

Our objective is to build a comprehensive online collection of disability research and translational resources for the Australian context. Our Research to Action Guides are based on the best available local and international evidence and put together by subject matter experts to support research end users to engage with the evidence. We gather and analyse evidence about what works, and package that information into efficient and practical resources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Guide was authored by Associate Professor Loretta Sheppard, Dr. Rosamund Harrington and Kelly Howard from the School of Allied Health, Occupational Therapy, at Australian Catholic University. This resource was developed with support of Australian governments through the Research and Data Working Group.

NDS Gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Government in establishing the NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research.

SUGGESTED CITATION


ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This Research to Action Guide articulates the key components of best practice values, or the “golden rules” of supporting the transition from school to employment for young adults with disability in Australia. For practice leaders in all of the relevant sectors, this Guide summarises the research evidence and provides checklists and a poster to support evidence based best practice in effective school to employment transitions.

The full Research to Action Guide suite of resources includes a rapid review of relevant research literature and three practice guidance resources, targeted at service users, service providers (frontline workers) and practice leaders. The Rapid Review provides a full listing of references informing this practice leaders guide. The entire Research to Action Guide is available at the CADR Clearing House, www.cadr.org.au.

FEEDBACK

Do you have feedback, or a suggestion for a Research to Action Guide? We welcome your thoughts and ideas. Please contact info@cadr.org.au.
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY: GUIDANCE FOR PRACTICE LEADERS

CONTENTS

1: Summary of the evidence
2: What does the evidence mean for practice leaders?
3: Checklists – the golden rules for effective school to work transitions
4: Factors increasing the likelihood of young people finding a job
5: Poster for your workplace
1: SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 and Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 recognise that all people with disability have the right to work “on an equal basis with others.” It states that “this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities”. Despite these visions, young people with disability continue to face significant barriers to employment in their transition from school in Australia.

In 2015, there were 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability. Of these, 1.0 million were employed and 114,900 were looking for work. Therefore, 53.4% of working age people with disability were in the labour force, compared to 83.2% of people with no disability.

The unemployment rate for people with disability was 10% compared to 5.3% for people with no reported disability. Only 25% of people with severe or profound core activity limitation were employed in 2015, compared to 58.9% of those with mild core activity limitation.

In 2015, employed people with disability were more likely to work part-time, compared with employed people without disability. 27.0% of people with disability were working full-time, compared with 53.8% of those without disability.

We reviewed the research evidence and it described six “golden rules” for evidence-based best practice in supporting school to employment transitions for young people with disability.

1. **Expectation**
   Young people can work

2. **Collaboration**
   Different sectors can work together

3. **Participation**
   Young people should partake in meaningful work during their school years

4. **Skills development**
   Everyone involved in school transitions needs expertise

5. **Family involvement**
   Family-centred transitions have better outcomes

6. **Early transition planning**
   Early planning impacts outcomes
Figure 1. The shared vision: elements of effective school to employment transitions

**BY**
- Young person
- Schools
- Employment services
- Disability services
- Family
- Community

**FOR**
- Young person
- Employment services personnel
- Transition school personnel

**IN**
- Decision-making
- Work experience
- Skills development

**BETWEEN**
- Transition school personnel
- Employment services personnel
- Disability services
- Local employers

1. High Expectations of Employability
2. Local Cross-agency Collaboration
3. Participation of Young Person
4. Skills Development
5. Family Involvement
6. Early Transition Planning
2: WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE MEAN FOR PRACTICE LEADERS?

The “golden rules” are drawn from research over the last 20 years. They provide us with an understanding of the barriers and enablers to transitioning to employment for young people with disability.

1. EXPECTATION

- Schools, disability employment services and community agencies must have an expectation and belief that young people with disability can and will work when they leave school.
- Educators, health professionals and disability workers must convey a belief in the capacity of the young person for work and community contribution, and take active steps to foster this expectation in their colleagues and the young person’s family.
- One of four key attributes identified in a study of successful disability employment specialists was ‘principled optimism’. This means the workers believed in the capabilities of the young people they were working with and in their own capacity to support those young people into work.
- Belief and expectation as the forerunner to possibility has been supported by several studies and ‘high expectations and the assumption of employability for all young people with disabilities’ has been articulated elsewhere as a key element of quality transition services.

2. COLLABORATION

Interagency collaboration is one of the strongest predictors of employment but also one of the least known about. It seems there is a lack of willingness within agencies to understand the role of other service providers leading to a culture of service siloes, blame-shifting and inefficiencies. Barriers to interagency collaboration can be caused by:

- Differences in ‘philosophies, language and procedures’ which might bias professional groups towards their own way of thinking
- Transition professionals having limited skills in collaboration with few opportunities to develop these skills
- A lack of optimism about whether collaborative practices can be improved.

One piece of research looked at community consulations, which indicated a desire in the community for positive collaborations such as:

- Working with local agencies to develop employment opportunities and educate, support and reward local employers who hire young people with disabilities
- Strengthen school and transition services to provide opportunities for young people with disability to learn ‘work skills, attitudes and experiences’
- Facilitate social and professional networking that can lead to employment
- Provide opportunities for ‘mock interviews’ before going on work experience or applying for jobs
• Encourage young people to seek work-related learning opportunities outside the school setting
• Encourage young people to link with existing networks, including vocational and employment services and civic and service clubs
• Hold a local ‘jobs fair’ where employers come to meet prospective employees
• Enhance and promote inclusive workplaces
• Support families in transition to actively participate in this process and to engage in networking and social connection.

3. PARTICIPATION

Participation in meaningful paid and unpaid work experiences during the last years of secondary school is consistently the most significant indicator of post school success

• Young people with disability who exit school with a job are more likely to maintain a positive career trajectory than those who do not.
• Having held a paid, community-based job while still in secondary school is strongly correlated with post-school employment success.
• Paid work at high school not only helped build skills in young people with disability but can also allay fears and concerns of employers.
• Parent and family participation in transition planning leads to a greater likelihood of getting a job.
• Participating in early work experiences, traineeship and apprenticeship are all associated with higher likelihood of employment.
• Participation by employers in supported employment programs that allow young people with disability to work in competitive work settings with ongoing supports.

Schools and service organisations must adopt a student-focused planning approach to transition

Young people with disability and their families must participate actively in any decision-making processes and in each of the following:

• Career development activities that assist with exploring vocational preferences and opportunities
• Decision-making meetings and processes, such as Individual Education Plan meetings
• Work experience
• Skills development
• Vocational training
• After school work
4. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR STUDENT AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Skills development is required for the young person, their family, school transition staff, employment personnel and policy/department staff. The responsibility for enabling employment for young people with disability does not just reside with the young person!

- Vocational development while at school which provides students with real opportunities to acquire important work skills and values, inform their vocational decision-making and shape their career aspirations for the future, is crucial.
- Skills and knowledge to deliver high quality transition and employment preparation programs are required in both educators and employment specialists. Support to develop these may include:
  - Training in person-centred approaches to conducting transition and employment preparation meetings
  - Training and skills development in developing creative and responsive vocational-preparation activities and programs both at school and in the community
  - Training and development in the roles and responsibilities of each of the different service providers
- Desirable attributes and skills in employment specialists are noted as:
  - Principled optimism – high expectations and belief that young people with disability can work, and that they personally have the skills to facilitate this
  - Cultural competence – a broad understanding of the way values and norms influence how people act, and what this means when looking for a job
  - Business orientation approach that shows an understanding of business needs and the importance of customer service
  - Networking ability that is creative, strategic and responds to business needs.

5. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- Family-centred transition planning processes help to increase student and parent expectations for the future, self-determination, and vocational decision making.
- Families that are involved in discussions about future careers, and are active in networking and making links with employers in the local community have a positive influence on work-related outcomes for young people with disabilities.
- Strategies suggested by a parent advocacy group include:
  - Engaging parents in training opportunities and information sessions about post-school and community-based services
  - Partner with families to explore role models who can provide a vision to the young person and their family of what adult life might be like
  - Interact respectfully with families taking into account unique cultural or social values and perspectives
  - Begin planning for post-school activities early, and engage families in the planning process through Individual Education Plans
– Partner with families to build networks in the community
– Work with families to support students in domains of life beyond work such as recreation and leisure, continued education and community participation
– Partner with families to support the young person’s independence.

Young people who are independent in daily living skills and mobile within the community are more likely to be employed post school.

Please refer to the full article for details of activities that align with the seven strategies

6. EARLY TRANSITION PLANNING, INCLUDING ATTENTION TO TRANSITION PROGRAM STRUCTURE

• Involvement of community-based employment organisations and transition services EARLY in the transition process is crucial to the successful post-school employment outcomes.
• Students who receive early transition services at age 14 years are more likely to achieve employment outcomes compared to those who start transition services at age 16.
• Student-identified transition goals and participation in employment-related activities lead to a higher likelihood of employment.

Transition programs should adopt Kohler’s Taxonomy of Transition Practices, first developed in 1996\(^{12}\) and recently updated (2016). This states that ‘transition-focused planning begins no later than age 14’ (p. 4).

Kohler’s model includes five practice categories: family engagement; program structures; inter-agency collaboration; student development; and student-focused planning.

In the journey to employment, early transition planning is crucial so that school-based programs can take into account the work aspirations and skill development requirements needed to enable young people with disability to achieve employment.

The Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 provides a ‘model for planning, organising and evaluating transition education services and programs’ which has remained relevant for more than 20 years.
3: CHECKLISTS FOR PRACTICE LEADERS

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR POLICY MAKERS, SERVICE MANAGERS AND SCHOOL PRINCIPALS?

Use the questions below to check where your organisation is at.

For policy makers, the six values provide a checkpoint against which to ask:

Do existing policies ‘hold up’ against each of these values?

☐ YES  ☐ NO

If the answer is ‘no’, what needs to be done to align policy with these values?

• What training and experience do staff working in this policy area need to work collaboratively and effectively with service providers?

If the answer is ‘yes’:

• What structures and systems can be put in place to enable service providers to act on these values?
• What structures and systems are barriers to services providers acting on these values?

For service managers, the six values provide a checkpoint to ask:

Does our organisation act on each of these values?

☐ YES  ☐ NO

If the answer is ‘no’, there is work to be done at each level of the organisation to identify where and why these values are not abided by.

• What training and service systems can be put in place to enable our service to act on these values?
• What are the barriers to our service acting on these values?
• What relationships does our organisation have with schools, other services and policy makers in the local area?
If the answer is ‘yes’:

- What further actions does our service need to take to ensure ongoing collaborations with other services?
- What processes are in place to ensure continued connection with service users in the local area?
  - How does our service ‘hear’ the end-user voice?
- What processes are in place to ensure recruitment and retention of high quality staff to our service?
- What training is provided to existing staff to ensure continued personal and professional growth and development?
- What relationships does our organisation have with key employment stakeholders in the local area?

For school principals, the six values provide a checkpoint to ask:

Does our school act on each of these values?

☐ YES    ☐ NO

If the answer is ‘no’, identify where and why are these values not abided by.

- Are there structural or organisational impediments?
- What training can be put in place to enable our teaching and transition staff to act on these values?
- What other factors are barriers to our school acting on these values?
- What relationships does our school have with local service organisations and policy makers?
- Who is responsible for effective transition processes?
  - How does our school support the transition team to build effective skills and collaborations?
If the answer is ‘yes’:
• What further actions does our school need to take to ensure ongoing collaborations with other services?
• What processes are in place to ensure continued connection with service users in the local area?
• How does our school ‘hear the voice’ of transitioning students and their families?
• What processes are in place to ensure recruitment and retention of high quality staff to the transition program in our school?
• What training is provided to existing staff to ensure continued personal and professional growth and development?
• What relationships does our organisation have with key employment stakeholders in the local area and how do we nurture that and involve employers in our school community?

For all practice leaders, we must ask:

Do my staff and I have an understanding of disability, diversity, rights and working inclusively?
☐ YES  ☐ NO

LEARNING ABOUT DISABILITY

No matter which sector you work in, having an understanding of disability and human rights is important when providing support to young people to leave school and enter the workforce.

Disability Aware is a short, online course that will enhance your skills and knowledge about working inclusively whether you are an employer, teacher, community worker or other service provider. https://www.nds.org.au/events-and-training/all-events-and-training/disability-aware-an-awareness-and-inclusion-program-2515

Disability and a good life: Thinking through disability is a longer, free online course designed to address your understanding of disability, disability across the life course and other topics. https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/thinking-through-disability

Always ask: What is my organisation doing to enable an effective school to employment transition for young people with disability?
4: **Young People with Disabilities are More Likely to Get and Keep a Job If They...**

- Have had a paid job in the community while at school
- Have done work experience (multiple times) while at school
- Have responsibilities for household jobs at home
- Participate in work preparation activities at school
- Get on well with other people
- Are as independent in self-care as they can be
- Are independent in community travel
- Have people around them who believe they can work and will get a job when they leave school
- Know people in the community and have good community networks
BEST PRACTICE FOR SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS

1. Create an expectation at school, at home and in the community that young people with disability will seek and obtain employment as part of their adult life.

2. Collaborate locally with other service providers to form partnerships between schools, employment services and disability services.

3. Enable participation in work experience at multiple time points and provide opportunities for work experience in the same or different areas of work.

4. Provide collaborative cross-sector opportunities for scaffolded skill development and transfer of skills from one setting to another.

5. Involve families and local community supports at all levels of discussion about employment and post-school adult life roles.


BY
- Young person
- Schools
- Employment services
- Disability services
- Family
- Community

BETWEEN
- Transition school personnel
- Employment services personnel
- Disability services
- Local employers

FOR
- Young person
- Employment services personnel
- Transition school personnel

IN
- Decision-making
- Work experience
- Skills development

The research informing this poster is available to view in the Research to Action Guide on Effective School to Employment Transitions, available at www.cadr.org.au
NDS gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Government in establishing the NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research.
The Centre for Applied Disability Research (CADR) is an initiative of National Disability Services (NDS). CADR aims to improve the wellbeing of people living with disability by gathering insights, building understanding, and sharing knowledge. CADR’s applied research agenda is helping to build the evidence base and support stakeholders to better understand what works, for whom, under what circumstances and at what cost.

RESEARCH TO ACTION GUIDES
Bridging the gap between what we know and what we do. Our objective is to build a comprehensive online collection of disability research and translational resources for the Australian context. Our Research to Action Guides are based on the best available local and international evidence and put together by subject matter experts to support research end users to engage with the evidence. We gather and analyse evidence about what works, and package that information into efficient and practical resources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
This Guide was authored by Associate Professor Loretta Sheppard, Dr. Rosamund Harrington and Kelly Howard from the School of Allied Health, Occupational Therapy, at Australian Catholic University. This resource was developed with support of Australian governments through the Research and Data Working Group. NDS Gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Government in establishing the NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research.

SUGGESTED CITATION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE
This Research to Action Guide articulates the key components of best practice for supporting the transition from school to employment for young adults with disability in Australia. This Research to Action Guide suite of resources includes a rapid review of relevant literature and three practice guidance resources, targeted at service users, service providers and disability employment practice leaders. The Rapid Review provides a full listing of references informing this Practice Summary. The entire Research to Action Guide is available at the CADR Clearing House, www.cadr.org.au.

FEEDBACK
Do you have feedback, or a suggestion for a Research to Action Guide? We welcome your thoughts and ideas. Please contact info@cadr.org.au.
1: School to work: what is the problem?
2: The six “Golden Rules”
3: Supporting young people to think about what they would like to do when they leave school
4: The role of supports in school to employment transitions
5: Useful links and resources
6: Poster for your workspace
1 - SCHOOL TO WORK: WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 and Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 recognise that all people with disability have the right to work “on an equal basis with others.” It states that “this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities”. Despite these visions, young people with disability continue to face significant barriers to employment in their transition from school in Australia. We need to do better at supporting young people into employment.

The transition from school to young adulthood is a very important time for all young people. Decisions at this time can really impact a young person’s future.

How can this Guide help?

- This guide is about supporting young people with disability on their journey from school to employment
- It will be useful for you if you are an educator, employer, work in an employment service, work as an NDIS planner, Local Area Coordinator, or anyone who supports young people with disability.
- It includes the most important elements of supporting young people to think about work and explore opportunities to gain employment, as identified by the research evidence.
- If you want to know more about the research behind this resource, read the Rapid Review which forms part of this Research to Action Guide.

2 - THE SIX ELEMENTS TO SUCCESS: THE ‘GOLDEN RULES’

Research shows us that there are six elements to supporting the journey to employment for young people with disabilities:

1. Expectation
   Young people can work
2. Collaboration
   Different sectors can work together
3. Participation
   Young people should partake in meaningful work during their school years
4. Skills development
   Everyone involved in school transitions needs expertise
5. Family involvement
   Family-centred transitions have better outcomes
6. Early transition planning
   Early planning impacts outcomes
Figure 1 shows how these elements connect and interact to maximise employment opportunities for young people.

**What this means:**
Young people with disabilities are more likely to get and keep a job if they:

- have had a paid job in the community while at school
- have done work experience (multiple times) while at school
- have responsibilities for household jobs at home
- participate in work preparation activities at school
- have some social skills
- are as independent in self-care as they can be
- have received training and support in community travel
- believe they can work and will get a job when they leave school
- have people in their lives who believe they can work
- know people in the community and have good community networks

**Figure 1.** The shared vision: six elements of effective school to employment transitions
What does this tell us?

- Schools, families, communities and employment services play a crucial role in supporting young people with disability on their pathways to employment.
- The keys to the best outcomes are
  - EARLY transition planning,
  - COLLABORATION between service providers, educators, families and communities (the greatest barrier is the often poor collaboration between schools and post-school programs and services
  - INVOLVEMENT of families,
  - PARTICIPATION in work experience and work preparation programs,
  - DEVELOPMENT of skills for transition to adulthood in the young person, their family, service provider personnel and educators,
    and above all...
  - HIGH EXPECTATIONS of the young person’s capacity for work and continued skill development during adulthood.
3 – SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO DO WHEN THEY LEAVE SCHOOL

Many young people need support to think about and decide what is right for them. Service providers can help by working with young people to identify their strengths and what they like to do best. This will help uncover what skills they will need to make the transition from school work best for them.

It can help to think about these three questions:

**Who am I?**
- What am I good at?
- What do I like to do?
- Who would I like to be like?

**What sort of jobs are there in my community?**
- What sort of jobs are around?
- What sort of organisations are in my local area?
- Where do people I know work?

**How will I fit in?**
- Where am I comfortable?
- Where can I use my skills?
- What new skills can I learn?
4. WHOSE JOB IS IT ANYWAY? THE ROLE OF SUPPORTS IN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS

Research evidence shows that we get the best result when everyone is working together. All supporters need a shared vision for post-school achievement for students, and to understand each other’s roles.

Successful transitions from school to employment require early and effective collaboration and planning between students with disability, their families, schools, and community employment services. They require emphasis on self-determination and helping students to explore and develop their vocational skills, goals and career pathways. Best practice involves high expectations, cross-agency collaboration, work experience and opportunities to develop work skills.

THE ROLE OF DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

The door to employment should never be closed to people with disability. Community participation and other day service staff have a responsibility to work with people accessing their services to identify their goals as part of their individual plans. This includes any vocational, educational or employment goals.

Use these questions to think about how your disability service provider views employment:

- Do staff believe people with disability can work?
- What opportunities exist for people to know what work is?
- What does the organisation do to assist people to think about employment?
- Are NDIS plans being used to help find employment opportunities?
- How do organisations balance government expectations of people having a job with people’s right to choose not to work?

THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS

A central barrier to people with disability participating in the workforce is low expectations about their capacity to work. Low expectations can result from a lack of awareness of the many benefits people with disability can bring to the workplace.

Under The Australian Disability Discrimination Act (1992) it is against the law for an employer to treat a person unfairly because of their disability. A person with disability should be given equal opportunity to do a job, if they can do the main activities or ‘inherent requirements’ of the job.

Disability Employment Services can assist with addressing any concerns employers may have about recruiting people with disability. There is also financial assistance available to employers to help them provide suitable accommodations for employing people with disability. This might include:

- making reasonable adjustments to enable people with disability to access their workplace;
• providing employment specific aids and equipment such as computers and modified desks;
• making reasonable adjustments to buildings, such as installing ramps; and,
• providing transportation for work activities, such as attending meetings.

5. USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

LEARNING ABOUT DISABILITY

No matter which sector you work in, having an understanding of disability and human rights is important when providing support to young people to leave school and enter the workforce.

• Disability Aware is a short, online course that will enhance skills and knowledge for working inclusively whether you are an employer, teacher, community worker or other service provider. https://www.nds.org.au/events-and-training/all-events-and-training/disability-aware-an-awareness-and-inclusion-program-2515

• Disability and a good life: Thinking through disability is a longer, free online course addressing our understanding of disability, disability across the life course and other topics. https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/thinking-through-disability

JOB ACCESS

Job Access is the national hub for workplace and employment information for people with disability, employers and service providers. It provides information for people with disability, employers and service providers on available support, rights and responsibilities, video stories, downloadable information sheets, and links to information about medical conditions or disability types. Visit www.jobaccess.gov.au

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES


TICKET TO WORK

Local Ticket to Work networks operate around Australia to support transitions to work using NDIS supports and coordinated inter-agency plans involving educators, community service agencies, LACs and employment services. They can help customise employment plans including a combination of work-focused curriculum, work experience and school-based apprenticeships and traineeships: www.tickettowork.org.au

Find out more about the NDIS and how Ticket to Work interfaces with other service systems in the school to work transition: http://www.tickettowork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/School-to-work-transition-and-the-NDIS-.pdf
SCHOOL LEAVER EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS (SLES) AS PART OF THE NDIS

Download a useful NDIS factsheet for students and teachers: https://www.ndis.gov.au/people-disability/sles

NDIS

Access information about the NDIS online: www.ndis.gov.au

TRANSITION TO WORK

Transition to Work provides intensive, pre-employment support to improve work readiness for early school leavers aged 15–21 years, and help them into work (including apprenticeships and traineeships) or education.

Transition to Work operates as a separate service from DES and may be suitable for young people with less severe disability who do not meet the eligibility requirements for DES.

Find out more through this factsheet: https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/em16-0023_transition_to_work_factsheet_02.pdf

APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

Employment and related economic outcomes achieved by young people with disability who graduate from an Australian apprenticeship or traineeship are similar to those for graduates without disability (Cocks, Thoresen & Lee, 2013).

Information on support for students with disability to do an apprenticeship is available via the Job Access website: https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/people-with-disability/support-do-apprenticeship

OPEN EMPLOYMENT

There are a range of programs to support employers to create job opportunities for people with disability including the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) which gives financial help to people with disability and employers to buy work related modifications and services, PaTH Internships which are short placements in the workplace to give young people the opportunity to demonstrate their skills to a potential employer, and Wage Subsidies. Information on these programs are available on the Job Access website: https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employers/available-support/196

FURTHER EDUCATION OR TRAINING

Further education and training can help students with disability develop their work readiness skills and transition on open employment or higher education. Options for education or training are available on the Job Access website: https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/people-with-disability/finding-training-course-expand-your-skills
SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Young people with disability can receive support through the NDIS and other programs to develop their own small business: https://jobsearch.gov.au/selfstart; https://vimeo.com/139302542

VIDEO RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY PREPARING FOR WORK

- Online videos for people with low literacy skills to help understand the planning process, set goals, and choose providers http://www.healthyactivelife.org/
- http://www.healthyactivelife.org/working.html
- Living a Good Life videos: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdRMSabtLY; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4hiOSTCSxM; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-v3FIYGYMYw

DECISION-MAKING ONLINE RESOURCE

NDS gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Government in establishing the NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research.
THE CENTRE FOR APPLIED DISABILITY RESEARCH

The Centre for Applied Disability Research (CADR) is an initiative of NDS. CADR aims to improve the wellbeing of people living with disability by gathering insights, building understanding and sharing knowledge. CADR’s applied research agenda is helping to build the evidence base and support stakeholders to better understand what works, for whom, under what circumstances and at what cost.

RESEARCH TO ACTION GUIDES

Our objective is to build a comprehensive online collection of disability research and translational resources for the Australian context. Our Research to Action Guides are based on the best available local and international evidence and put together by subject matter experts to support research end users to engage with the evidence. We gather and analyse evidence about what works, and package that information into efficient and practical resources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Guide was authored by Associate Professor Loretta Sheppard, Dr. Rosamund Harrington and Kelly Howard from the School of Allied Health, Occupational Therapy, at Australian Catholic University. This resource was developed with support of Australian governments through the Research and Data Working Group.

NDS Gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Government in establishing the NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research.

SUGGESTED CITATION


*Corresponding author: Loretta Sheppard Loretta.Sheppard@acu.edu.au

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This Research to Action Guide articulates the key components of best practice for supporting the transition from school to employment for young adults with disability in Australia, based on the best available evidence. This suite of resources includes this rapid review of relevant literature and three practice guidance resources targeted at service users, service providers and disability employment practice leaders.

FEEDBACK

Do you have feedback, or a suggestion for a Research to Action Guide? We welcome your thoughts and ideas. Please contact info@cadr.org.au.
This paper reports on the literature that informs our understanding of the needs and recommended practices for key stakeholders when considering the transition to employment for young adults with disability, particularly those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

**SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE**

The research evidence points to six elements of effective transitions from school to employment for young people with disability. These elements, or ‘principles’, can be considered a shared vision for those supporting young people into employment. The principles and their relation to supporting the journey to employment are displayed in Figure 1.

1. **Expectation**¹⁻⁵  
   Young people can work

2. **Collaboration**³, ⁶⁻⁸  
   Different sectors can work together

3. **Participation**¹, ⁵, ⁶, ⁹⁻¹³  
   Young people should partake in meaningful work during their school years

4. **Skills development**³⁻⁵, ¹¹, ¹⁴⁻¹⁶  
   Everyone involved in school transitions needs expertise

5. **Family involvement**¹², ¹³, ¹⁵, ¹⁷, ¹⁸  
   Family-centred transitions have better outcomes

6. **Early transition planning**³, ¹¹⁻¹³, ¹⁹  
   Early planning impacts outcomes
Figure 1. The shared vision: Six elements of effective school to employment transitions

- **BY**
  - Young person
  - Schools
  - Employment services
  - Disability services
  - Family
  - Community

- **BETWEEN**
  - Transition school personnel
  - Employment services personnel
  - Disability services
  - Local employers

- **FOR**
  - Young person
  - Employment services personnel
  - Transition school personnel

- **IN**
  - Decision-making
  - Work experience
  - Skills development

1. High Expectations of Employability
2. Local Cross-agency Collaboration
3. Participation of Young Person
4. Skills Development
5. Family Involvement
6. Early Transition Planning
AN EFFECTIVE TRANSITION SERVICE ACCORDING TO THE EVIDENCE:

Building a streamlined, integrated local transition service for young people with disability requires the following:

- **Local community consultation and ‘buy-in’ to create:**
  - A collective local vision for the employment of young people with disability
  - A climate of respect and collegiality amongst service agencies
  - Lines of communication between service providers at all levels
  - Easily accessible local knowledge about service provider roles and capacities

- **Commitment at each level of service provision to:**
  - Learn about and understand the philosophy and purpose of other service groups
  - Build knowledge of the continuum of learning and skill development across school year levels, during the transition years and into the post-school environment
  - Identify and clarify roles, responsibilities and timelines for key actions across each service level
  - Identify key personnel in each organisation who can take responsibility for good communication practices

- **Highly trained personnel at each service level who:**
  - Understand the learning needs of young people with disability
  - Implement client and family-centred approaches
  - Facilitate interviewing based on principles of self-determination
  - Understand the needs and nuances of the local employment context

‘Efforts to change the employment landscape for young people with IDD [intellectual and developmental disability] must ultimately occur at the level of individual communities’ (Carter et al, 2016, p. 413)
THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 and Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 recognise that all people with disability have the right to work “on an equal basis with others.” It states that “this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities”. Despite these visions, young people with disability continue to face significant barriers to employment in their transition from school in Australia\textsuperscript{59}.

In 2015, there were 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability. Of these, 1.0 million were employed and 114,900 were looking for work. Therefore, 53.4% of working age people with disability were in the labour force, compared to 83.2% of people with no disability.

The unemployment rate for people with disability was 10% compared to 5.3% for people with no reported disability. Only 25% of people with severe or profound core activity limitation were employed in 2015, compared to 58.9% of those with mild core activity limitation.

In 2015, employed people with disability were more likely to work part-time, compared with employed people without disability. 27.0% of people with disability were working full-time, compared with 53.8% of those without disability\textsuperscript{63, 64}.

A lack of early planning and collaboration between community and employment services and schools\textsuperscript{57}, combined with a low expectation that young people with disability will work upon leaving school\textsuperscript{61}, contribute to poor employment outcomes for students with disability in Australia.

High-quality benchmarking is required if we are to track improvements in employment outcomes over the coming years. This is particularly important with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, of which economic participation as a key principle.

METHOD

A database search was conducted using keywords related to disability, employment, vocational rehabilitation, work skills, transition and youth for the period 2007 to 2017. 92 papers met the criteria for full text review and, from these, 50\textsuperscript{1–10, 15, 19–57} were included for data extraction. A further nine papers\textsuperscript{11–14, 16–18, 58, 59} were added from hand-searching, meaning a total of 59 papers were used for the purpose of answering the following questions:

Our current knowledge of the best ways to support the journey to employment for young people with disability is drawn largely from observational and cross-sectional or ‘snapshot’ studies which have been conducted in the USA. These tend to focus on the experiences of young people with disability and their families, or factors that predict employment outcomes. 90 per cent of the papers reviewed for this Research to Action Guide fall into these research categories, and only a small number of studies have evaluated the effectiveness of programs designed to prepare young people with disability leaving school to enter the workforce. Cross-sectional and
experiential literature do provide a solid basis on which to build interventions and programs. However, studies which examine the effectiveness of these programs are urgently needed.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the factors affecting employment participation for young adults with disability?

What are the key elements of effective service provision for young people with disability transitioning from education to employment?

Research Question 1: What are the factors affecting employment participation for young adults with disability?

The factors affecting employment participation for young adults with disability identified in the literature generally fall into two categories. First, the environment, such as the physical, social and political environment and the service and employment context. Second are those that relate to the individual or ‘person’ factors, including being motivated to work, having the capacity for independence in self-care, having the social and work skills necessary for employment, and having a belief that employment is achievable. These factors are identified in the literature as being either positive (enabling) or negative (barriers) when considering their link to participation in employment. They have usually been identified through studies which correlate the things that have happened for a young person at one point in time with their employment status at a later point in time. They can be considered predictors of future employment, and may reasonably be assumed to have influence over outcomes, but not a direct causal effect.

FACTORS IDENTIFIED AS ENABLERS FOR EMPLOYMENT

‘Environment’ factors

- High expectations of those around the young person
- Being ‘treated as an adult’
- High parental expectations and experience with household chores
- Support with planning during the transition process
- Opportunities for young person to participate in career development activities and vocational experiences
- Provision of career-related services which include support to develop skills in problem-solving and stress management
- Opportunities for work experience
- Practical work experience, repeated over time
- Paid work experiences
- Parent and family support and influence
- Participation in vocational experiences at school as a starting point for a career pathway
- Counselling and guidance for seeking and retaining job, including assistance on the
Early transition services

‘Person’ factors
- Motivation and abilities
- ‘Readiness for adulthood’ such as the ability to navigate post-school systems, ability to manage oneself physically, ability to deal with stress and self-advocacy skills
- Ability to manage personal care and other activities of daily living
- Participation in developing Individual Education Plan (IEP) specification of employment or work goals, written with measurable outcomes
- Characteristics such as self-determination, social skills, work competence, general education
- Career awareness and vocational skills
- ‘Job readiness’

FACTORs IDENTIFIED As BARRIERS To EMPLOYMENT

‘Environment’ factors
- A lack of involvement with outside services during transition planning
- Wait lists for services and/or diminished availability of services
- A lack of capacity or willingness to adapt by workplace
- Parental ideas or expectations that do not match the reality of what is available in terms of work
- Fear of losing benefits
- Work environment factors such as being accepted as part of the team
- Low expectations of those around the young person
- Difficulty with transport

‘Person’ factors
- A lack of employment may lead to unhealthy routines in an individual
- Doubt (in oneself or by others) about readiness to ‘become and adult’ and the social skills required to participate in the workforce
- Low expectations, low level of independence and ability in life skills, low levels of confidence

**SUMMARY OF BARRIERS AND ENABLERS IN SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS**

There is strong evidence in the literature that work experience while at school is a key factor in predicting post-school employment. In Australia, it has been shown that apprenticeships and traineeships are an effective way to achieve positive employment outcomes. Apprenticeships and traineeships provide paid, hands-on, on-the-job training with support and those with disability achieve similar outcomes to those without disabilities. It is also evident that young people with disability require support to find an apprenticeship or traineeship, to keep going, and to finish the traineeship.

Research has found that paid work experience and supportive site visits not only help to build young people’s skills, but also allay fears and concerns of employers about the prospect of employing and retaining a young person with disability.

Studies have also found that independent self-care and highly-rated social skills in the classroom are related to employment outcomes. In addition, an expectation of post-school employment by the young person, and the young person’s family, school staff and vocational counsellors, is highly-correlated with post-school employment.

Findings also suggest that school and community-based vocational programs must be carefully-targeted to individual needs. In other words, support services must match the needs of the individual within the context of the environment.

It is therefore incumbent on educators and vocational specialists to know the young people they are working with, and to understand the manner in which the key elements for effective service provision can be embedded in their organisation and program delivery.
Research Question 2: What are the key elements of effective service provision for young people with disability transitioning from education to employment?

There are two key studies that inform the evidence answering this question. In 2016, Haber et al\(^6\) pooled the findings from existing international studies on post-school employment outcomes and conducted a meta-analysis to explore trends and identify consistent results. They found that, although the existing literature is based largely on observational, cross-sectional, experiential or predictive studies, they are now extensive enough to provide a solid foundation of information on which to base future programs and research. These authors used the substantive body of research investigating relationships between what happens during the school years and post-school outcomes to assess which experiences have the strongest relationship with which outcomes. This provides us with the best available – and reasonably reliable – indicators of the elements for effective service provision for young people transitioning from education to employment. The findings reinforced the value and continued relevance of Kohler’s\(^{12}\) Taxonomy of Transition Practices consisting of student-focused planning, student development, family involvement, attention to program structure and interagency collaboration. Importantly, Haber et al found that some of the least-studied predictors were those that have the strongest effects on employment outcomes, such as interagency collaboration.

Combining the key constructs of Kohler’s\(^{12}\) Taxonomy of Transition Practices from 1996 and Haber et al’s 2016 papers with other relevant evidence, the key elements of effective service provision for young people with disability transitioning from education to employment can be described as:

1. **EXPECTATION**

   Service organisations, including schools, disability employment services and community agencies, must have an expectation and belief that young people with disability can and will work when they leave school\(^{1-3}\).

   - Educators, health professionals and disability workers must convey a belief in the capacity of the young person for work and community contribution, and take active steps to foster this expectation in their colleagues and the young person’s family.
   - One of four key attributes identified in a study of successful disability employment specialists was ‘principled optimism’. This means the workers believed in the capabilities of the young people they were working with and in their own capacity to support those young people into work\(^4\).
   - Belief and expectation as the forerunners to possibility have been supported by several studies\(^{1, 2}\) and “high expectations and the assumption of employability for all young people with disability” have been articulated elsewhere as key elements of quality transition services\(^{62}\).

This is not new, but it remains current! Early\(^{58}\) and recent work\(^{18}\) clearly state the need for high expectations, and contemporary work by Pleet-Odle, A., et al.\(^{18}\) has suggested guidelines on how to achieve this with families. This article provides strategies and activities to create
expectation in working with families. In doing so, we may see a flow-on effect influencing the culture in education settings and service organisations.

2. COLLABORATION, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

Interagency collaboration is one of the strongest predictors of employment\(^6\), yet little is known about how to make it happen.

Best practice in ‘transition to work’ services and systems includes interagency collaboration. In fact, interagency collaboration has been found to be one of the strongest predictors of employment\(^6\) – though little is known about what it looks like in practice, how we move towards it, or how we measure it. In 2016 in the USA, community consultations were conducted to see what local communities do to solve the issue of poor employment rates for young people with disability\(^7\). They found that there was a desire in local communities to:

- Develop employment opportunities by working with local council bodies and educating, supporting and rewarding local employers who hire young people with disability;
- Strengthen school and transition services by providing integrated opportunities for young people with disability to acquire ‘work skills, attitudes and experiences’ throughout the year;
- Equip young people with disability with strategies for social and professional networking that can lead to employment;
- Provide opportunities for ‘mock interviews’ before going on work experience or applying for jobs;
- Encourage young people to seek work-related learning opportunities outside the school setting;
- Encourage young people to link with existing networks, including vocational and employment services and civic and service clubs;
- Hold a local ‘jobs fair’ where employers come to meet prospective employees;
- Enhance and promote inclusive workplaces; and
- Support families in transition to actively participate in this process and engage in networking and social connection.

There is much in the literature (and practice) that indicates an unwillingness or lack of ability in agencies to understand the role of other service providers. This has led to service siloes, blame-shifting and inefficiencies. A survey of school teachers and vocational counsellors in the USA\(^3\) found that both groups rated the importance of collaboration as high, but the feasibility of it occurring as low. Although interagency collaboration was a key variable in improving post-school employment outcomes, it occurred infrequently and was poorly understood. Barriers to interagency collaboration were thought to include:

- Differences in ‘philosophies, language and procedures’ which might bias each professional group towards their own way of thinking;
- Transition professionals having limited skills in collaboration with few opportunities to develop these skills; and
• A lack of optimism about whether collaborative practices could be improved. School and vocational systems seem to remain separate. For this to change, teachers and employment specialists must find ways to align their beliefs about post-school outcomes for young people with disability.

Those involved in school to employment transitions must develop a shared vision, understand each other’s roles and share information.

Given that work experience prior to leaving school is crucial, vocational programs in schools that coordinate with local community services would seem one effective way of building collaborative processes. Community and disability employment services must work collaboratively with schools to establish effective pathways. There is a need for developing clear parameters, definitions and processes for interagency collaborations, and a need to measure the outcomes of this.

3. PARTICIPATION, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON STUDENT-FOCUSED PLANNING

Participation in meaningful paid and unpaid work experiences during the last years of secondary school is consistently the most significant indicator of post-school success.

- Young people with disability who exit school with a job are more likely to maintain a positive career trajectory than those who do not.
- Having held a paid, community-based job while still in high school was strongly correlated with post-school employment success.
- Paid work at high school not only helped build skills in young people with disability, but also allayed the fears and concerns of employers.
- Parent and family participation in transition planning increased the likelihood of getting a job.
- Participating in early work experiences, traineeship and apprenticeship are all associated with higher likelihood of employment.
- Participation by employers in supported employment programs that allow young people with disability to work in competitive work settings with ongoing supports is significant.

As part of building local collaborative practice, service organisations (both educational and post-school vocational) must ensure young people with disability and their families participate actively in any decision-making processes, and in each of the following:

- Career development activities that assist with exploring vocational preferences and opportunities
- Decision-making meetings and processes, such as Individual Education Plan meetings
- Work experience
- Skills development
4. STUDENT AND SERVICE PROVIDER SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Skills development is required not just for young people with disability but for those who work with them on their journey to employment.

Research has shown that from the early secondary years, schools must set programs in place that prepare young people for work by developing vocational and employability skills and include opportunities for work experience. Vocational development during school that provides students with authentic opportunities to acquire important work skills and values informs their vocational decision-making and shapes their career aspirations.

Skill development is required not just for young people with disability but for those who work with them on their journey to employment, particularly educators and employment specialists. Support to develop these skills might include:

- Training in person-centred approaches to conducting transition and employment preparation meetings
- Training and skills development in developing creative and responsive vocational-preparation activities and programs both at school and in the community
- Training and development in the roles and responsibilities of each of the different service providers

Employment specialists in schools and community organisations provide a crucial resource for helping young people with disability to find and retain a job. People working in these roles require a unique mix of skills and characteristics. To be effective, employment and transition services need to consider ways to attract and advance individuals with compatible characteristics and explore whether these core skills and competencies can be developed.

Desirable attributes and skills in employment specialists are noted as:

- Principled optimism – high expectations and a belief that young people can and will work, and that they personally have the skills to facilitate this;
- Cultural competence – a broad understanding of the way values, norms and traditions influence how people act, and why it is important to understand these influences in the pursuit of skills for employment;
- Business orientation – approaches that show a capacity for understanding business needs and the importance of customer service; and
- Networking ability that is creative, strategic, and responds to business needs.

Employment specialists must have skills in discovery and assessment; building employer relationships; job matching; and providing or building workplace supports.

Other suggestions for building skills include group training sessions for families and programs that include principles of self-determination, social skills applied to the work setting, work competence and general education. These have been linked with greater likelihood of getting a job.
Key message for all service providers
Young people with disability are often provided with fewer opportunities for developing work-ready skills when, in fact, they need more frequent and more varied opportunities for skills to consolidate and become transferable from one setting to another.

5. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Families that are involved in discussions about future careers and are active in networking and making links with employers in the local community have a positive influence on work-related outcomes for young people with disability\textsuperscript{15}.

There is much evidence supporting the view that family-centred transition planning helps to increase student and parent expectations for the future, self-determination, and vocational decision-making\textsuperscript{12, 13, 15, 17}. Families that are involved in discussions about future careers and are active in networking and making links with employers in the local community have a positive influence on work-related outcomes for young people with disability\textsuperscript{15}.

Seven strategies were developed by a parent advocacy group for professionals aiming to support increased parental involvement\textsuperscript{18}:

1. Engage parents in training opportunities and information sessions at school about post-school and community-based services:
   - Include transition information and introductions to employment services
   - Include families in visits to adult service agencies
2. Partner with families to explore role models who can provide a vision to the young person and their family of what adult life might be like:
   - Connect the young person and their family to successful adults with disability
   - Set up family support groups focused on transition to adulthood issues, including seeking and finding employment
3. Interact respectfully with families, taking into account unique cultural or social values and perspectives
4. Begin planning for post-school activities early, and engage families in the planning process through Individual Education Plans
5. Partner with families to support the young person’s independence:
   - Young people who are independent in daily living skills and mobile within the community are more likely to be employed post-school
6. Partner with families to build networks in the community
7. Work with families to support students in domains of life beyond work such as recreation and leisure, continued education and community participation

Please refer to the article by Pleet-Odle et al for details of activities that align with these seven strategies\textsuperscript{18}.
6. EARLY TRANSITION PLANNING, INCLUDING ATTENTION TO TRANSITION PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Students who receive early transition services (at age 14) are more likely to achieve employment outcomes compared to those who start transition services at age 1619.

Research shows that student-identified transition goals and participation in employment-related activities lead to a higher likelihood of employment post-school11. Involvement of community-based employment organisations and transition services early in the transition process is crucial to successful post-school employment outcomes47.

Transition planning should adopt the taxonomy first developed by Kohler12 (and recently updated13) which states that transition-focused planning begins no later than age 1413. Kohler’s updated model retains the five practice categories described in the earlier model (Family Engagement, Program Structures, Interagency Collaboration, Student Development, and Student-focused Planning) but includes updated activities and structure.

For effective transitions from school to employment, early transition planning is crucial so that school-based programs can take into account the work aspirations and skill development requirements to enable young people with disability to achieve employment. The Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 provides a “model for planning, organising and evaluating transition education services and programs”13 which has remained relevant for more than 20 years and should not be ignored.
EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SUPPORT

Frameworks and interventions that collaboratively incorporate the elements of effective school to employment transitions need to be developed. These might include:

- A conceptual framework and funding model for developing and implementing a cross-agency collaborative approach to supporting transition to employment
- Training and skill development programs for school and employment agency personnel for supporting students in their transition to employment
- Work experience programs co-constructed by schools and employment services to fit the local work context
- The development of sequenced, scaffolded work skills curricula for implementation at school and continued post-school
- Embedded structured, scaffolded work experience placements repeated throughout the transition years at school and continued post-school
- Exploring the use of simulated work experiences in order to develop skills for work experience in real settings

EVIDENCE GAPS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Running alongside the development of frameworks and interventions is the need for robust evaluation. Research has so far been mostly observational, cross-sectional or exploratory in nature. The findings from this research provide a valuable platform on which to build programs and interventions. Studies that examine the effectiveness of these programs are now urgently needed (see Figure 2 for a visual representation of the research agenda past, present and future).

**Figure 2.** Research past, present and future

- Past studies have been mostly:
  - Observational studies (what happens in practice)
- Current studies are mostly:
  - Studies identifying factors affecting employment outcomes
- Future studies must include:
  - Studies evaluating the effectiveness of programs, longitudinal analysis of employment outcomes, effectiveness of programs implemented under the NDIS
FUTURE RESEARCH SHOULD INCLUDE:

Interagency collaboration

- Exploration of interagency collaboration: what it is, how we define it and how we measure it
- Once defined, research is needed to evaluate the impact of implementing an interagency collaborative approach: does it improve post-school outcomes in line with expectations?

Work experience and skills development programs

- Evaluation of work skills development programs, preferably those designed to compare two different approaches, or compare the effect of participating in a work skill program with not participating in the program at different times
- Evaluation of systematically co-constructed work experience programs, ideally compared to existing programs or approaches to work experience
- Studies that evaluate the effectiveness of vocational preparation programs at school or post-school, particularly those that are tailored to meeting the needs of the local community and employment context
- Studies examining the barriers and enablers to open employment, with an emphasis on effective practices (e.g., HR practices, policy, effectiveness of traineeships, local government practices)
- Studies that benchmark existing school transition programs against best practice approaches such as Kohler’s Taxonomy of Transition Practices
- Longitudinal studies that track the educational attainment and post-school employment experiences of young people with disability for 10 to 15 years following school

The National Disability Insurance Scheme

- Longitudinal studies tracking employment participation following the introduction of the NDIS, effective benchmarking of employment via the NDIS
- Analysis of the role of the NDIS in supporting participation in employment, including skill development and the provision of supports in employment settings

FINAL MESSAGES

An active focus on employment outcomes is necessary.

Youth with disability face similar challenges in finding employment as youth without disability, but to a greater degree and in more areas.

Opportunities for career and skill development are required more frequently for young people with disability.
REFERENCES:


63. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4430.0 Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings. 2015

64. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australia’s Welfare 2017; Section 8.2 Participation in society by people with disability. 2017
NDS gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Government in establishing the NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research.
BEST PRACTICE FOR SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS

1. Create an expectation at school, at home and in the community that young people with disability will seek and obtain employment as part of their adult life.

2. Collaborate locally with other service providers to form partnerships between schools, employment services and disability services.

3. Enable participation in work experience at multiple time points and provide opportunities for work experience in the same or different areas of work.

4. Provide collaborative cross-sector opportunities for scaffolded skill development and transfer of skills from one setting to another.

5. Involve families and local community supports at all levels of discussion about employment and post-school adult life roles.


The research informing this poster is available to view in the Research to Action Guide on Effective School to Employment Transitions, available at www.cadr.org.au

The Initiative of National Disability Services